

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001278

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INR/MR, I/RW, I/REC; PA
SA/INS (CAMP, DEAN) SA/PD (SCENSNY, ROGERS, STRYKER); SSA/PAS

E.O. 12958:N/A

TAGS: [KPAO PHUM PTER EAID OIIP PREL CE LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA PLAY: Coverage of PDAS Camp's roundtable discussion
Peace Process with senior editors

1. (U) SUMMARY. Following a roundtable discussion with PDAS Don Camp on July 30 with senior newspaper editors, press coverage in Sri Lanka was largely positive and upbeat. Newspapers, both English and vernacular, covered the event factually and placed their coverage of the event very prominently. Key topics of the coverage included the peace process, the need to move forward with peace negotiations and the message sent by the June Co-chairs conference. Editorial comment, while limited, reinforced the message of urgency iterated by the Co-chairs. END SUMMARY.

Headlines

2. (U) Focusing on the call to resume peace negotiations, the independent English DAILY MIRROR made coverage of the event its lead, reporting (07/31): "Get back to peace talks now - U.S. makes urgent appeal to Govt. and LTTE."

3. (U) The government-owned English Daily News reported (07/31): "U.S. reiterates support for peace efforts." Echoing that sentiment, independent Tamil daily VIRAKESARI reported ((07/31): "America wishes that the peace process be successful - U.S. deputy assistant secretary."

SIPDIS

4. (U) The independent English SUNDAY LEADER reported (08/01): "U.S. joins chorus to start talks.", and, in the same issue, "Peace process Talks or bust." Following in that vein, independent Sinhala daily LANKADEEPA reported (07/31): "Confirmed security necessary for quick foreign assistance; peace process has slowed down, says U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary."

5. (U) The independent daily ISLAND reported (08/02): "Free, democratic, and peaceful Sri Lanka: In U.S. national interest, says Camp." (Note: The ISLAND devoted three-quarters of their 08/02 editorial page to coverage of the roundtable, reprinting a transcript of the discussion prepared by PD Colombo.)

Editorial excerpts:

6. (U) Under the header "Stranded position of the international community," independent Tamil weekender THINAKKURAL commented (08/01) "Those in power, though the international community had issued many warnings that the funds pledged at Tokyo would be diverted to elsewhere unless there is progress in the peace talks, have not shown any interest in diverting their course of action towards the peace process. Last week, Norwegian deputy foreign minister Vidar Helgesen who visited Sri Lanka, said that the patience of the international community is being tested by the Sri Lankans, as there's no progress at sight.... U.S. principal deputy assistant secretary of state Donald Camp who visited Sri Lanka two days after the departure of Helgesen requested the LTTE and the government to return to the negotiation table as soon as possible or else the funds may go somewhere else.... the present ceasefire agreement had survived many obstacles and problems and is in effect for the last two and half years because of the involvement of the international community.... If the international community fails to somehow convince the two parties to resume peace talks early, we will not be able to safeguard the ceasefire agreement any longer.... The disinterest shown by the international community today will only bring disaster to the country."

7. (U) Under the op-ed header "Peace process: Talks or bust" The independent English SUNDAY LEADER (08/01) quoted PDAS Camp: "Similar sentiments were echoed by U.S. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of South Asian Affairs, Donald A. Camp who was on a two-day visit to Sri Lanka last week. 'The international community will flag in some of its efforts,' he said referring to international interest on Sri Lanka and the continuing lack of progress. Camp added that development would depend on security. 'I think the important thing is for both sides to get back to the table,' he observed. Camp said that Sri Lanka has been kept alive within the U.S. administration due to the personal interest on the country paid by Secretary of State Colin Powell and his deputy Richard Armitage. He echoed Helgesen when he said that dozens of international crises appear on the agenda of the State Department on a daily basis. He also did not rule out the fact that interest in Sri Lanka might diminish within the State Department if a change of guard

does take place at the November 2, US presidential election. 'That (interest) presumably would change,' he said."

18. (U) PDAS Camp was not able to clear on this message before departing Post.

Lunstead